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# **‘Unwanted invaders’: The representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK and Australian print media**

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## **Abstract**

In recent months asylum seekers have once again become front page news in many British newspapers with headlines including: ‘It’s good but I don’t like the food says asylum seeker: 130 migrants move into top hotel’ (Daily Express, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2014). While this may reflect a broader increase in stories about immigration making headline news it is also reminiscent of press coverage of forced migrants at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This article explores the way in which asylum seekers and refugees have been discursively constructed by the print media in both the UK and Australia between 2001 and 2010. 40 articles were selected for analysis following a discursive psychological approach (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). It was found that the print media, in both the UK and Australia, draw on a number of interpretative repertoires when constructing accounts of refugees and asylum seekers. The principal repertoire found to be used was that of the ‘unwanted invader’, which was achieved through the use of metaphors of criminals and water. However, this repertoire was found to be used differently in both media; in Australia the focus was on border protection and keeping ‘these’ people out of the country, whereas in the UK the repertoire was used predominantly to convince the reader that refugees and asylum seekers needed to be removed from the country. Consideration is also given to how these accounts changed over the period and what the implications may be now that the topic has once again returned to the front pages of our daily newspapers.

**Keywords:** asylum, media, newspapers, discursive psychology

## **Introduction**

Since the beginning of the 21st century the broad topic of immigration, and in particular that of asylum, has grown in importance as conflicts in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and, more recently Syria, have caused people to flee in record numbers (UNHCR 2014) . The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2014) reported that

the numbers of people forcibly displaced as a result of conflict, persecution and other human-rights violations in 2013 was the highest since records began at 51.2 million people worldwide. At 33.3 million, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) made up around 65% of those forcibly displaced in 2013 (UNHCR, 2014). However, there were also 16.7 million refugees and 1.2 million asylum seekers globally in 2013 (UNHCR, 2014) and it is these two groups which form the focus of the current paper.

Despite the attention that they receive the UNHCR (2014) estimates that, in 2013, 126,055 refugees were living in the UK, with a further 23,070 cases for asylum still being considered. This represents just 0.23% of the total population of the UK (based on a population figure of approximately 64.1 million in mid-2013, Office for National Statistics, 2014). In Australia there were 34,503 refugees and a further 13,559 cases for asylum being considered (UNHCR, 2014) representing only 0.2% of the total Australian population of 23.31 million (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

As the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers globally has grown, so to have these groups featured more prominently in the media. Pickering (2001) highlights the late 1990s as a particularly important time in Australia, when refugees and asylum seekers began to appear more frequently in the press as a perceived problem. In the UK, Greenslade (2005) suggests that asylum seekers have also attracted increasing press attention in the last fifty years. Indeed, Karpf (in a piece in the Guardian, 2002) reported that the Daily Mail had published over 200 articles about forced migrants in the year 2000 alone. After a fairly quiet few years, and as the wider debate around immigration intensified ahead of the 2015 General Election, recent headlines in the UK suggested that asylum seekers were living extravagant lifestyles at the tax payers expense. For example: 'It's good but I don't like the food says asylum seeker: 130 migrants move into top hotel' (Daily Express, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2014) and 'Living in comfort in a holiday hotel (at taxpayers' expense), the Calais lorry migrants: Eritrean asylum seekers say they are looking forward to a life in Britain', (The Daily Mail, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2014).

### ***Discursive approach***

Much of the recent research on accounts of asylum seekers and refugees in the print media has been from a linguistic perspective, analysing large corpora of articles to identify commonly used words and phrases (Baker and McEnery 2005; Baker et al. 2008; Gabrielatos and Baker 2008). However, there have also been studies conducted which use a discursive

psychological method, following Potter and Wetherell (1987). Discursive psychology emerged in response to cognitivist perspectives which treated discursively constituted acts as being separate and distinguishable from inner representations. Potter (1996) instead argues that when analysing discourse the focus should be on how a particular description is made to appear factual, and what is achieved by representing reality in this way. Discursive psychology can, to a certain extent, be seen as incorporating elements from the approaches of both critical discourse analysis and conversation analysis. Edley (2001, p.190-1), for example, states that critical discursive psychology 'aims to show not only how identities are produced on and for particular occasions, but also how history or culture both impinge upon and are transformed by those performances' (p.191).

Despite increasing media coverage, there are surprisingly few research studies looking at how refugees and asylum seekers have been discursively constructed in either the UK or Australian printed press. Of those studies that have, the most striking finding has been the use of water metaphors (floods, tides, swamped etc.) in media reports about refugees and asylum seekers (Pickering 2001; Baker and McEnery 2005; Baker et al. 2008; Gabrielatos and Baker 2008, KhosraviNik 2009). This was also found in Austrian newspaper reports about Kurdish asylum seekers in Italy by El Refaie (2001). Gabrielatos and Baker (2008) found that these metaphors were found more frequently in tabloid newspapers. Gale (2004, p. 334), in analysing representations of forced migrants in Australian newspapers prior to the 2001 election identified three themes which were "predicated on contrasting notions of both national identity and the Other". Firstly, use of a 'human face' metaphor which sought to portray Australia as a compassionate country. Secondly, 'border protection', worked to strengthen this portrayal by differentiating those who were deemed to be a threat to national security ('boat people'). A third theme that was found in his analysis related to the rights of refugees, although Gale notes that this representation was only found in commentaries and not within major news stories.

Lea and Lynn (2003) studied the discursive construction of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK media, analysing letters from members of the public which focused on the asylum debate. They demonstrated that asylum seekers were constructed in a mostly negative way within these lay discourses. This was achieved through a reconstruction and re-positioning of the social order of other groups in society so as to position the asylum seekers as outside of society. Similarly, O'Doherty and Lecouteur (2007) analysed articles in

Australian newspapers and found that certain types of categorisation ('boat people', 'illegal immigrants') were used which supported and encouraged specific marginalising practices.

Discursive psychology has been applied to a number of other areas related to asylum seeking such as people's talk about asylum seeking (Goodman 2010; Goodman and Burke 2010) and political statements and speeches (Charteris-Black 2006; Goodman and Johnson 2013, Capdevila and Callaghan 2008). Indeed, it has been found that many of the metaphors of water used by the media were also to be found in political statements from right-wing politicians in the UK (Charteris-Black 2006), suggesting that their use is a common discursive strategy by anti-immigration groups who seek to legitimize their views. Similarly, a discursive strategy of 'I'm not racist, but...' was found in both speeches by politicians (Capdevila and Callaghan 2008) and in lay discourse (Goodman and Burke 2010; Goodman 2010; Burke and Goodman 2012). In each case this strategy was employed to construct a sense of it not being racist to oppose asylum seeking.

The present study seeks to contribute to the field of discursive psychology by directly comparing how the media in two countries (Australia and the UK) have discursively constructed accounts of asylum seekers and refugees. The research questions that are posed are:

1. How do the print media in the UK and Australia construct their accounts of refugees and asylum seekers?
2. What effect is achieved through constructing asylum seekers and refugees in this way?

I argue that metaphors of criminals and water are commonly used in both medias but that they are used in quite different ways in each country; in Australia as a means of border protection (keeping them out) and in the UK to signal that they need to be removed from the country.

## **Methodology**

A total of 40 newspaper articles were selected for analysis; 20 of these articles came from daily UK newspapers and 20 came from daily Australian newspapers. Articles were selected by typing in the key words 'asylum seekers' and/or 'refugees' into the newspaper website search tools and the most relevant articles selected. A total of five UK newspapers were sampled: The Daily Mail, The Daily Mirror, The Daily Express, The Times, and The

Guardian. While there are many national daily newspapers in the UK, in Australia there is only one, *The Australian*, which was sampled as well as four other regional daily newspapers; the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Brisbane Courier Mail*, the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Age*. These newspapers were chosen to represent a range of differing Australian regions and, as with the UK newspapers, to ensure a balance between broadsheet and tabloid newspapers. These newspapers were also selected because they represent a range of political allegiances, with *The Guardian* and *Daily Mirror* backing the Labour Party and *The Times*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* supporting the Conservative Party. Three of the Australian newspapers can be seen as being politically aligned with the Conservative and Liberal coalition (*The Australian*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Brisbane Courier Mail*) while the other two are more supportive of the Australian Labour Party. A total of four articles were selected for analysis from each of the ten newspapers.

Articles from 2001 and 2010 were selected, two articles from each year for each of the newspapers, to ensure consistency across newspapers and years. Government elections took place in both countries in 2001 and 2010, and it was believed that this would make it more likely that the topic of immigration would feature prominently in the media.

Each of the 40 articles were analysed to look for any interpretative repertoires used within them. Discursive Psychologists, such as Potter and Wetherell (1987), have made use of the idea of interpretative repertoires in order to frame their analysis and have defined these as ‘a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize and evaluate actions and events’ (1987, p.138). Discursive psychologists, whilst emphasising ‘action orientation’ have also acknowledged that these repertoires are not always mutually exclusive and can create ‘ideological dilemmas’; rhetorical constructions of the same social object that develop together as opposing positions in a situated exchange (Billig et al. 1988).

### **Analysis**

The analysis focuses on extracts from several of the newspapers that were subjected to a discursive psychological analysis (Potter and Wetherell 1987). The purpose of this was to demonstrate how the media representations of refugees and asylum seekers were not a simple representation of reality and instead actively constructed reality. To do this, I will first outline three interpretative repertoires that were found to be prevalent in the data; the ‘unwanted invader’, the ‘dishonest’ asylum seeker and the ‘tragic’ asylum seeker. I will then show how these repertoires were not mutually exclusive and were used differently by each media. This,

I argue, has created what Billig et al. (1988) referred to as ‘ideological dilemmas’. I also look at differences across the period 2001 to 2010 when comparing between countries.

### 1) ‘Unwanted invaders’

A recurring theme in the forty articles was the ‘unwanted invader’ repertoire. Here the asylum seeker or refugee is positioned as actively unwanted; as someone to be fearful of, in contrast to the passive majority of the country. This repertoire was achieved in the newspaper articles analysed through the use of a number of discursive constructions which will be analysed in turn.

#### i) *Metaphors of criminals*

In both the Australian and UK articles, the most common metaphor found to be used, as a rhetorical device, was that of the criminal metaphor. This creates a picture of the asylum seeker or refugee as a potential threat to security. For example:

*Oscar’ is the high-security compound at Woomera where long-term detainees with little prospect of release are isolated from the rest (The Age, 24/11/2001).*

In this example from an Australian newspaper, the terms ‘detainees’, ‘isolated from the rest’ and ‘little prospect of release’ are expressions that would ordinarily be associated with media reports about criminals. Here, they are used to position the asylum seeker or refugee as someone to be fearful of. However, it also goes further to suggest that they are a group who need to be ‘isolated from the rest’.

In the following example, numbers are used to support the narrative that asylum seekers are criminals. However, no official source is given for the reported figures, a feature found to be common in newspaper reports about asylum seekers (Philo et al. 2013).

*Tear gas and water cannons were used by police to control about 300 asylum seekers who were attacking the perimeter fence with weapons about 9pm last night. (The Daily Telegraph, 20/12/2001)*

The terms ‘tear gas’, ‘water cannons’ and ‘perimeter fence’ position the asylum seekers as criminals and a threat which needs to be controlled. The use of the verb ‘attack’ in this sentence adds further to the criminal constructions used and emphasises that the asylum seekers were active in this disturbance. In contrast, the police are constructed in a passive manner. Use of these metaphors may legitimize the Australian Government’s policy of

detaining asylum seekers while their cases are heard and ultimately contributes to the unwanted invader interpretative repertoire.

Metaphors of criminals were also found in the UK articles. For example:

*Mr Green said that it was wrong to “lock up” children, adding that the review would look at various alternatives to detention of families, including tagging. (The Times, 15/6/2010).*

Terms such as ‘lock up’ and references to electronic tagging support the construction of asylum seekers as a group of people who the public should be fearful of in much the same way as they should be of other criminals who are tagged or ‘locked up’. Although Mr Green criticises ‘locking up’, his suggestion remains within the criminality repertoire. Philo et al. (2013) also found similar use and effect of prison metaphors in their 2006 sample of press reports about asylum seekers, with the term ‘at large’ being commonly used to refer to failed asylum seekers.

## ***ii) Metaphors of water***

Pickering (2001) identified the use of water metaphors in the construction of accounts of asylum seekers and refugees as problems (or deviants) in the Australian media. In the present study, a number of such metaphors were also found in both the Australian and UK articles. As both of the countries from which print media reports were analysed are island countries this may perhaps make the use of water metaphors more likely and more effective. However, El Refaie (2001) also showed that water metaphors were used in Austrian newspaper reports about asylum seekers in Italy.

In most cases, particularly in Australian newspapers, the metaphor of water is used as a warning about the number of asylum seekers entering or who are already in the country:

*The scheme has been operating for about 18 months as the flood of Middle Eastern boat arrivals has filled and overflowed detention centres, now the subject of a third report condemning living conditions. (The Age, 24/6/2001)*

In this example, ‘flood’ and ‘overflowed’ are used to construct an account of large numbers of people trying to enter the country. This is a metaphor which is also evident in UK newspapers:

*The bedraggled tide of Afghan humanity had jostled and pleaded for days to be let across the border at Chaman in south Pakistan. (The Daily Mirror, 23/10/2001).*



However, as the example above shows, it is in a different context to its use in Australian newspapers. Here, the metaphor is also used as a warning, but not to an imminent increase in refugee numbers crossing to the UK, (cf. KhosraviNik 2009). Rather, it is a warning of large bodies of people being displaced following the start of war in Afghanistan that could potentially be coming to the UK in the future. However, it must also be noted that this was from an article which was published two weeks after the war in Afghanistan began, following the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11th 2001. The use of the water metaphor may therefore have political motivations; constructing Afghanistan as a troubled country which harbours terrorists, in an attempt to support the then Labour government's decision to go to war in that country. In both of these examples the harsh living conditions experienced by the asylum seekers are exemplified through the use of water metaphors although both have different purposes.

## 2) *'Dishonest' asylum seekers*

A second, less prominent interpretative repertoire found in the articles was that of the 'dishonest' asylum seeker. This repertoire questions the asylum seeker's past history and integrity rather than explicitly constructing them as a criminal.

In the following example from a UK newspaper, the repertoire is drawn upon to question the age given by a group of young Afghan asylum seekers:

*The Afghans, who arrived in the UK as 'unaccompanied minors' and speak little English, live 15 miles away [...] many young refugees are suspected of lying about their ages because unaccompanied minors are given better treatment and support than adult asylum seekers (The Daily Mail, 2/4/2010).*

However, it also goes further and extends its use of the repertoire to imply that many young asylum seekers may be dishonest when giving their ages in the UK. The repertoire is also drawn on in the following example:

*The judge's decision will have the effect of encouraging bogus refugees to make false claims about their sexuality in order to avoid deportation (The Daily Express, 9/7/2010).*

Here, however, the repertoire has been used to suggest that asylum seekers may be doubly 'bogus' and that those whose cases are rejected would act dishonestly and attempt to stay in the country through lying about their sexuality. In this example, and the further example below, from an Australian newspaper, the author has drawn upon rulings that have been made by judges when drawing upon the dishonest asylum seeker repertoire:

*Mr Cavanagh found the asylum seekers colluded to lie about the explosion on the boat, near Ashmore Reef. He said most of the asylum seekers had known of the plan to cripple the boat, despite their denials (Sydney Morning Herald, 18/3/2010).*

In both examples the judges' rulings are used by the author to legitimize use of the dishonest asylum seeker repertoire in an attempt to position all asylum seekers as similarly dishonest and not to be trusted. Although this is similar in effect to use of the unwanted invader repertoire, it should be thought of as distinctly different, because it questions the very basis on which the asylum seeker is making their claim for asylum.

### **3) The 'tragic' asylum seeker**

A further repertoire found in the articles was that of the 'tragic asylum seeker'. Authors who used this repertoire constructed accounts of the asylum seeker as a 'tragic' person, in need of assistance, while also serving as a reminder of the unwanted invader. This example from an Australian newspaper illustrates this point:

*The sun had been up less than 20 minutes, but the asylum seekers knew they were in trouble. Their boat's engine had failed and the furious early morning seas were pushing them ever closer and closer to the jagged cliffs at Rocky Point. (Daily Telegraph, 17/12/2010).*

This account is constructed in a story-tale voice which serves the purpose of both appearing sympathetic to the asylum seeker but also actively warning the reader of the potential arrival of further asylum seekers. This style of writing is also evident in a further example below, which relates to the Tampa Affair; an incident which received worldwide media coverage following Australia's refusal to allow a Norwegian ship with over 100 asylum seekers on board to enter Australian territory. In it, those who were allowed to stay following the Tampa Affair are positioned in a 'tragic' way, whilst also keeping a reminder of the 'unwanted invader' repertoire through reference to the Tampa Affair:

*When the Tampa rescued them, they had only the clothes on their back. Now their weatherboard house is full of furniture and goods donated through the Refugee and Migrant Service. (The Australian, 13/12/2001).*

In the UK newspapers, examples were found of articles making use of the 'tragic' repertoire:

*They were brought in ravaged by hunger and close to death, but these children are now among the lucky ones. (The Daily Mirror, 26/9/2001).*

*They fled terrorists, missiles and the Taliban in a desperate attempt to stay alive. And when they arrived at their ramshackle destination they were greeted with gunfire and rocks. (The Daily Mirror, 23/10/2001)*

These examples, through drawing on this repertoire, construct an account which could be seen as a justification for the political decision of going to war in Afghanistan. Both were taken from the Daily Mirror, a newspaper which broadly supports the UK Labour party and who were in government at the time. At the same time a picture of people (asylum seekers) in great need is also espoused.

There were also attempts in the UK press to use this interpretative repertoire without a political justification for involvement in wars in other countries as the following example demonstrates:

*Two men and women who plunged to their deaths from a high-rise flat yesterday may have been asylum seekers who faced deportation. (The Daily Mirror, 8/3/2010).*

Here an ideological dilemma is created through drawing on both the ‘unwanted invader’ repertoire (asylum seekers who faced deportation) and the ‘tragic’ person repertoire (plunged to their deaths) and thus requiring the reader to reach their own conclusions about the nature of the event.

#### ***4) ‘Keeping them out’ or ‘removing them’: differences between discursive constructions in the Australian and UK print media***

While the prevailing repertoire used to construct accounts of refugees and asylum seekers was that of the ‘unwanted invader’, differences were found in how these accounts were constructed in the UK and Australian newspapers. In Australia, this repertoire is one of ‘keeping them out’ while in the UK it is one of ‘removing them’.

##### ***i) Australia: keeping them out***

In 2001, the introduction of the ‘Pacific Solution’, by the Howard government, saw asylum seekers attempting to enter Australia by boat diverted to offshore processing centres on Pacific Islands where they were detained while their case was considered (O’Doherty and Lecouteur, 2007). Although this policy was mostly phased out in 2007, it was partly re-introduced by the Labour Government in 2012. Whilst many of the articles analysed for the present study fell within the construction of asylum seekers as the unwanted invader, it is only those who arrive by boat, under the offshore component of Australia’s Immigration

Policy, who have been constructed in this way. Asylum seekers and refugees who arrived via the Australian Government's Humanitarian Programme component remained virtually unmentioned within these constructions and this perhaps explains why the term 'boatpeople' was used repeatedly throughout the articles in place of the term asylum seeker.

*Boatpeople will travel to palm-fringed pacific island processing centres on a passenger liner under a new Federal Government plan.* (Brisbane Courier Mail, 23/11/2001)

Here, there is a suggestion that 'boatpeople' will be living a luxurious lifestyle on board a passenger liner or pacific island. Not only does this question their status, it also seeks to portray Australia as a compassionate country and a protector of human rights. This was at a time, following the implementation in 2001 of the Pacific Solution, when Australia was criticised internationally for its policy of deterring asylum seekers (Philo et al. 2013; O'Doherty and Lecouteur 2007).

This theme was found in many of the Australian articles and was one of keeping asylum seekers from entering the mainland:

*When the Tampa, carrying 400 asylum seekers, was turned back from Australian shores in mid-August, the refugee debate shifted from human rights to border protection. Since then about 1500 asylum seekers have been housed as part of the "Pacific Solution" in offshore camps and the government has prided itself in not allowing its unwanted arrivals to step foot on shore.* (The Age, 24/11/2001)

As demonstrated in these examples, asylum seekers were found to be commonly used as a topic for political rhetoric as the asylum debate featured heavily in the Australian press leading up to the Federal Government elections in Australia in both 2001 and 2010. However, quantification rhetoric is also used here to further endorse this construction of the unwanted invader.

*The fear of boats and the anxiety felt by people living in what they call the exburbs [...] is why Gillard said on Day One that she wasn't in favour of "a big Australia".* (Brisbane Courier Mail, 23/7/2010)

Here, the use of the words 'fear' and 'anxiety' create an account which warns the reader about the arrival of asylum seekers. When combined with political opinion ('Gillard said') this has greater rhetorical effect. This shows that, in 2010, asylum was still on the political agenda and that the overarching theme of keeping asylum seekers out of Australia was still a prevalent ideology amongst politicians in the country. This may be as a result of increasing asylum applications following the end of the Pacific Solution in 2008. However, throughout

the years of the Pacific Solution, Australia was heavily criticised amongst the international community for its stance on offshore processing and treatment of asylum seekers (Philo et al. 2013). There was a difference, however, in how these constructions were used. In 2001, it was used to defend against international criticism of its asylum policies. However, in 2010, there appears to have been a shift towards employing such constructions to call for the reinstatement of tougher policies.

## ***ii) The UK: removing them***

While constructions of asylum seekers in the Australian media concerned the ideology of keeping people out of the country and were aided by use of the unwanted invader repertoire, a common theme was also found within the UK articles. That is, a concern with the removal of failed asylum seekers from the UK.

Within this repertoire there is no attempt made to differentiate between discrete groups of forced migrants. Using this construction all asylum seekers are treated as failed asylum seekers and as a group of people which need to be removed from the UK:

*Asylum seekers are using new human rights legislation to delay their deportation from Britain, according to an immigration officer's union.* (The Times, 14/2/2001)

In particular this construction does not distinguish between those who are still seeking asylum and those who may have exhausted the asylum appeal process. Again, it is drawing on the 'dishonest' repertoire with the asylum seekers actively constructed as attempting to be dishonest. In 2014, 41% of initial asylum application decisions made in the UK conferred a grant of refugee status or temporary protection (Home Office, 2015); with a further 28% of those appealing also granted status. This highlights that constructing all asylum seekers in such a way is not only inaccurate but similarly has longer term implications for the ability of those granted status to integrate and feel a sense of belonging within the UK.

Analysis showed that this was particularly so in the UK articles from 2001, a time when asylum applications in the UK were at their peak (Home Office, 2014). Constructions such as these may therefore have been used in an attempt to construct all asylum seekers as an unwanted invading force. Further, the examples used above from a Conservative newspaper such as the Times, may have been an attempt to undermine the Labour government's immigration policies. This is further illustrated in the following example which combines the

criminal metaphors noted previously to construct an account which can be seen as a stark warning about asylum seekers:

*The Home Office, fearing a further outbreak of civil unrest in Britain's immigrant communities, is preparing to introduce strict guidelines on the tactics used to implement its tougher policy on the removal of more than 60,000 failed asylum seekers. The guidelines reflect a growing concern amongst ministers that the planned escalation of the removals programme could spark severe social tensions.* (The Guardian, 13/8/2001).

In this example, the term 'removals' is used repeatedly and is combined with a number of other discursive constructions such as 'tougher policy', 'escalation', 'severe social tensions' and 'growing concern'. The use of these terms positions asylum seekers as dangers to the community and, for those who have exhausted the asylum process, as needing to be removed. It is further aided by the use of figures to quantify the scale of the 'problem' at a time when asylum applications were at a record high (Home Office, 2014). Philo et al. (2013) also found, what they termed the 'deportation gap' to be the main focus of media attention for asylum seekers and refugees in 2006, despite annual asylum applications having rapidly decreased from their peak in 2002 (Home Office, 2014). In their review, they highlighted how numerical figures were commonly used by the media but were very often unsourced.

## Discussion

The Australian articles analysed in the present study had a focus on border protection and it was clear, through the repeated use of the term 'boatpeople', that it was specifically those attempting to enter the country illegally by boat that this repertoire was being used in relation to. By using such terms the print media were constructing an account of only one type of immigrant which clearly defined them from other groups of immigrants. This is in line with Sales' (2002) notion that UK government policy, in restricting access to the welfare state for asylum seekers, creates a division between the undeserving (asylum seekers) and the deserving (everyone else). Discursive constructions used in the print media have the power to influence their readerships' through the creation of such binaries and were made possible through the use of linguistic tools such as metaphors of water and criminals. This finding is in line with Pickering (2001) who concluded that asylum seekers were constructed as a deviant population through the use of accounts which again differentiated 'them' from 'us'. Similarly, Van Dijk (1987) argued that in discourses of immigration and social problems, a clear 'us/them' divide is created, which redefines these problems in terms of 'race' and

immigrants as outsiders who need to be ‘kept out’. The examples given in the present study show how repeated use is made of similar linguistic tools which construct asylum seekers as diverging from normality; the use of the criminal metaphor has made this a strong theme permeating the articles which seeks to differentiate between normal law-abiding Australians and the ‘criminal’ asylum seekers.

The use of such discursive constructions also appears to be legitimizing the Australian Government’s offshore processing policies and contributes a strong message that these asylum seekers will never belong in Australia. But, what impact does this have for those who seek asylum in Australia through the onshore (or non-irregular maritime) component and their sense of belonging in the country? In their attempts to construct such accounts it is interesting to note that the media has not made attempts to look at seeking asylum from the asylum seeker’s perspective. Neither is consideration given to how these constructions may impact upon those who have been granted refugee status and are now re-building their lives in Australia.

While an ideological dilemma was created through the use of the ‘tragic person’ repertoire, this was more common in the UK articles. In most cases the primary focus was on those who were fleeing wars, rather than focusing on the experiences of those who have, or are, seeking asylum in the respective countries. Although there has been some recent work in this area (Clare et al. 2014; Goodman et al. 2014; Liebling et al. 2014, Kirkwood 2012) I suggest that further work is essential to understanding both the experiences of those resettling within their host communities and the extent to which the media plays a role in creating a sense of belonging (or not) for those seeking, or who have sought, asylum. This is particularly so given that Leudar et al.’s (2008) study found a link between hostility themes found in media representations of forced migrants, local inhabitants representations and the impact that these had on forced migrants themselves. Indeed, they concluded that refugees and asylum seekers who participated in their interviews actively constructed their own identities around the hostility themes found in the media and local community. Again suggesting that the media has a role in creating a sense of belonging that impacts not only on forced migrants, but also on the larger community into which they resettle.

Pearce and Stockdale (2009) compared expert and lay views about asylum seekers. They found that lay views were more likely to be negative and to have been influenced by media representations of asylum seekers. Interestingly, they found that lay responses often

changed during the course of interviews as participants considered the issue in more detail. This could therefore have implications for education programmes that ensure the general public has greater access to information about asylum seekers. For many years the UK was described as a multicultural society, but there has been a more recent backlash against such an ideology (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010). However, work on adaptation and acculturation by Berry (1997) has suggested that a multicultural society provides immigrants with the ability to choose the optimal acculturation strategy, integration. The results of this study and others indicate that the media does have a role to play in influencing the wider public through its use of discourses and that this in turn may have an impact on the ability of forced migrants to both integrate and create a coherent sense of belonging.

Verkuyten (2005) found that the degree to which Dutch residents supported multiculturalism depended on whether participants endorsed a repertoire of asylum seekers having a 'lack of choice' as opposed to a decision based on 'personal choice'. The print media has the ability to influence its readership and, as Baker and McEnery (2005) have shown, the use of multiple repertoires has in some ways created a number of competing constructions of asylum seekers which the reader has to navigate. This is most evident when the repertoire of the 'tragic' asylum seeker is drawn upon and does create an ideological dilemma. However, this may be an example of where the authors of such articles, and indeed the newspapers themselves, have used the asylum issue as a backdrop to a wider political debate on tackling global terrorism and justifying decisions to go to war in specific countries. More recently in the UK, immigration, particularly from the EU, has become a major topic of concern for both politicians and the media and has tended to view all immigration from the repertoire of 'personal choice' (Verkuyten 2005). There may therefore be a danger that forced migrants continue to suffer from a loss of belonging as the media continues to construct an image of what Anderson (1983) referred to as the 'imagined community'. Indeed it may be useful to revisit this work to look at how the media constructs immigrants in a UK General Election year and the impact that this has on longstanding debates about multiculturalism and citizenship.

## **Conclusion**

This article has sought to demonstrate the ways in which asylum seekers and refugees have been discursively constructed in the print media in both the UK and Australia. The predominant repertoire used in the articles was that of the 'unwanted invader'; active



‘deviants or ‘criminals’ who have arrived to cause problems for the passive majority. The ideological use of these repertoires, did, however, vary between countries. The Australian media drew upon this repertoire to construct asylum seekers as a group they did not want to enter the mainland of the country. The UK articles focused on the need for removal of failed asylum seekers through use of this repertoire. In both countries there was evidence that asylum seekers and refugees were constructed as ‘tragic’ figures. Here, articles were drawing on the human side of conflict to defend political decisions and give the impression of being a compassionate country concerned with the human rights of those who have suffered losses. This, I argued, creates an ideological dilemma between the prevailing theme of the unwanted invader and that of the ‘tragic’ figure. Using a discursive psychological approach has shown the similarities in how the Australian and UK print media constructed a sense of reality through the use of these repertoires. However, this approach has also allowed the differing ideological assumptions between such constructions to be brought to the fore.

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